

Research Briefing N^o15

Effective Practices in Continuing Professional Development – Lessons from Schools

This research and development project seeks to understand what constitutes effective Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and to improve the capacity of schools to evaluate and provide effective CPD.

Key words: continuing professional development; professional learning; impact evaluation



Key findings

Key findings derived from the experience of the projects were that for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to be effective the following were needed:

- clarity of purpose at the outset in CPD activity;
- a specific focus and goal for CPD activity aligned to clear timescales;
- a focus on pupil outcomes;
- participants' ownership of CPD activity;
- engaging with a variety of CPD opportunities;
- time for reflection and feedback;
- collaborative opportunities for CPD.

Two key messages underpinned these findings:

- the importance of strategic leadership of CPD;
- the successes and challenges in evaluating the impact of CPD.

Figure 1 shows how the impact of CPD can be maximised through effective leadership.

What we did

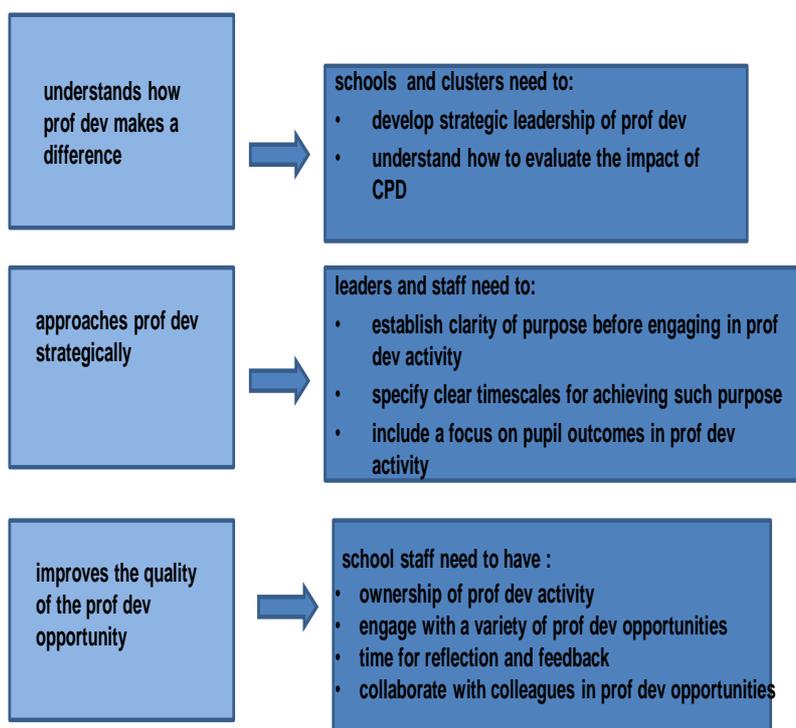
The Effective Practices in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme (2007 to 2008), funded by the Training and Development Agency (TDA), had the twin aims of helping schools improve their provision and evaluation of CPD for the school workforce and the TDA to increase its understanding of the nature of effective CPD.

Phase 1 of the research involved over 670 schools as well as local authorities and higher education institutions. Of the projects involved in Phase 1, 68% submitted proposals successfully for Phase 2 and were awarded grants of up to £10,000. All of the projects were related to one or more focus areas such as: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects; 14–19 provision; schools facing challenging circumstances; early professional development; and impact evaluation.

The projects helped schools improve their practice and led to a deepened understanding of effective CPD and its impact, and gave rise to many interesting and exciting projects, a selection of which became case studies.

Figure 1: Maximising the impact of professional development

The effect of professional development activity is maximised if its leadership:



How we did it

Schools reported to regional consultants and to the project directors via questionnaires and pro-formas. From the large sample of schools a small number of case studies described and analysed the journeys that the projects had made: what were their starting points and baselines; how far had they progressed (and how did they measure that progress); what were important milestones on the way; and what impact had they achieved. An approach to impact evaluation is also presented. A total of 20 were completed for the TDA and a sample of these published (see Earley and Porritt 2009).

Further information

The research resulted in a final report for the sponsor:

Earley, P. and Porritt, V. (2009). *Effective Practices in CPD, Final Report to the TDA*. London: Institute of Education.

A book of the case studies was published as:

[Earley, P. & Porritt, V. \(eds\) \(2009\). *Effective Practices in Continuing Professional Development: Lessons from Schools*. London: Institute of Education Bedford Way series.](#)

Articles for academic and practitioner journals were also published:

Earley, P. and Porritt, V. (2013). Evaluating the impact of professional development: the need for an evidential baseline. *Professional Development in Education*.

Earley, P. and Porritt, V. (2010). Effective practices in continuing professional development – what works? *Professional Development Today*, Issue 13 (1) pp 5-10.

Porritt, V. (2013). *Evaluating the Impact of Professional Learning, Challenging Professional Learning*. London: Routledge

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